UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

GENERAL

E/ECE/1280
8 March 1993

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Forty-eighth session
(Provisional Agenda item 5(e))

COMMISSION'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL PROGRAMMES AND TO THE ORGANIZATION'S PROGRAMMES DESIGNED TO ASSIST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OF OTHER REGIONS

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. The activities described below are considered either (a) to be of particular relevance to United Nations programmes designed to assist developing countries of other regions, or (b) to constitute a contribution of the ECE to the Organization's global programmes.

2. In the past year, 27 countries from other regions have participated in 110 ECE meetings, in particular in the sectors of trade and transport. Ten of these were countries of the ESCAP region, 9 of the ECA region, 4 of the ECLAC region and 4 of the ESCWA region.

3. Within the framework of its assistance to the countries in transition in central and eastern Europe and, in particular, its programme of workshops, a number of issues have been covered which could be of interest to the developing countries of other regions, including those related to human settlements; environment; industrial development; energy; transport; statistics; international trade; development issues and policies; and food and agriculture, forestry and timber.

(a) ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OF OTHER REGIONS

Transport

4. The ECE ensures the secretariat of the ECOSOC Committee of Experts which prepares the United Nations Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods. The Committee of Experts' mandate is global and developing countries are represented among the experts. ECE cooperates with other international

GE.93-20767

organizations (IMO, ICAO, UNEP, OCTI, CCNR and IAEA) and the other regional commissions to ensure worldwide implementation of the Recommendations. The secretariat provides advice to developing countries which request it on the interpretation of the Recommendations and facilitates exchange of information on the experience of countries in this field.

5. Since 1982 the ECE, in cooperation with ECA, has continued to implement Council resolutions on the Europe-Africa permanent link through the Strait of Gibraltar. In response to Council resolution 1991/74 the Executive Secretaries of ECA and ECE are preparing an evaluation report on the studies relating to the project in the period 1982-1993 for submission to the Council in 1993.

6. In cooperation with ECA a seminar on facilitation of international road and rail transport, including harmonization of transport regulations, is being prepared with the main objective of transferring available know-how to countries in Africa and to assist ECA in developing a coherent programme in this field in the context of the Transport and Communications Decade for Africa.

7. As an associate member of the Inter-agency Steering Committee on phase II (1992-1996) of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, ECE continues to promote the adoption and implementation of multilateral legal instruments in the field of transport, such as the 1968 Vienna Convention, the 1975 TIR Convention and the 1982 Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Control of Goods, 1982, with a view to providing common legal régimes applicable to international land transport between Europe, Western and South-East Asia.

Statistics

8. The ECE continues to provide assistance to developing countries through the transfer of results and know-how of the ECE/UNDP Statistical Computing Project Phase 2 (SCP-2). Thirty-two final SCP-2 products have been disseminated to 45 developing countries in all regions as well as to the regional commissions and other international organizations. These activities encompass not only maintenance and dissemination of individual products but also their further development. Based on the recommendation of the Steering Committee of the SCP-2, many projects launched under the SCP-2 continue successfully within the programme of work of the Conference of European Statisticians.

Trade facilitation

9. Conscious of the global importance of facilitation for improving the international trade of all countries, the Economic and Social Council has called on the regional commissions, jointly with UNCTAD, to formulate a project for interregional cooperation that would promote the reduction, simplification and harmonization of formalities, procedures and documentation, in particular through the phased application of the United Nations rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT). It requested them to elaborate specific proposals relating to

interregional cooperation in this field and present them to bilateral donors and funding organizations.

10. The ECE, together with the other regional commissions and UNCTAD, is in the process of finalizing such project proposals at both the regional and global levels. Conscious, however, that a solid foundation for UN/EDIFACT at the regional level should be created before proceeding to its global application, the ECE secretariat will start with the development of the training component of the regional project applicable to ECE economies in transition as well as to other ECE countries where facilitation of international trade procedures is still at an early stage. The secretariats of ECE, UNCTAD and ITC have formed a joint Task Force to enhance cooperation in the areas of trade efficiency and trade promotion.

Economic analysis

11. The profound systemic transformations taking place in central and east European countries include the transition to a market economy, ownership restructuring and privatization, introduction of a democratic political system, establishment of the rule of law and the integration of their economies into the European and global economies. ECE member countries have stressed the need for high-quality observation and analysis of these developments, the results of which would be relevant for other countries of the region which are developing from an economic point of view and also for developing countries of other regions.

12. In 1992 the secretariat published Demographic Causes and Economic Consequences of Population Aging (UN/ECE Economic Studies, No.3, issued jointly with the United Nations Population Fund). The comparative analysis of the demographic aspects of changes in the age structure, general economic aspects of aging, labour force and employment and also of the impact of aging on the public sector and age-cost profiles indicate that problems of aging transcend the usually understood frontiers of social and economic systems and the stages of development. This study is relevant, therefore, for developing countries both in the region and elsewhere. Several other population projects carried out by the ECE secretariat with financial support of UNFPA – on family surveys, social and economic conditions of elderly populations, east-west international migration and population-related policies – are in general, and in particular from the methodological point of view, of direct importance for developing countries in other parts of the world.

Energy

13. The ECE secretariat assisted the ESCWA secretariat in organizing a Symposium on Gas Developments and Market Prospects by the Year 2000 and Beyond (Damascus, Syria, June 1992) (ENERGY/WP.3/R.13).

14. Two ad hoc meetings were held in 1992 to elaborate an interregional project entitled "Global Energy Efficiency 21" for the benefit of developing countries in other regions. The Project is based on the concept of the ECE Energy Efficiency 2000 Project, i.e. it aims at enhancing the transfer of knowledge, experience and information on energy-efficient technologies and practices on the occasion of international trade fairs, seminars and

workshops. Projects would be generated "bottom-up" at the regional level, linked through an interregional steering committee and financed from extra-budgetary resources. At present, projects are identified at the regional level and proposed for funding. (See ENERGY/AC.13/R.2/Rev.2 entitled "Global Energy Efficiency 21 - an Interregional Approach"). The Committee on Energy in November 1992 took note with considerable interest of the proposed Project and agreed to transmit it to the Commission for consideration and possible transmission to ECOSOC (ECE/ENERGY/21, para. 35).

Agriculture

15. The Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development provides developing countries with an opportunity to participate in the elaboration of international commercial standards for products of special interest to them, especially fresh or dried fruit and vegetables; it also offers advice and assistance regarding quality control for exports.

16. The secretariat and the various joint ECE/FAO working parties provide direct or indirect inputs to FAO's work aimed principally at developing countries in the fields of agriculture and food statistics, sustainable agricultural and rural development, land use, farm management, selected aspects of soil fertility, the use of water resources and fertilizers.

Timber

17. Through its seminars and teams of specialists for ECE countries which are developing from the economic point of view and developing countries in other regions, the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training provides practical information on forest operations and management. The International Forest Fire News is published twice yearly and contains information from all parts of the world. The proceedings of the seminar on forest fire prevention, land use and people were published. Preparations have begun for a seminar in Portugal in 1994 or 1995 on training of forest workers in Mediterranean countries.

Human settlements

18. The Committee on Human Settlements is publishing a report on housing policy guidelines which is of practical value to developing countries. It addresses the importance of the provision of housing as a necessary precondition for human development in all countries and regions of the world.

(b) CONTRIBUTION TO UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL PROGRAMMES

Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (Brazil, 1992)

19. A compendium of UN/ECE conventions in the field of environment was circulated at the UNCED, as they provide elements which could be of assistance to countries of other regions in their campaigns to halt and reduce environmental degradation and to promote sustainable development. They included the 1991 Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context; the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of

Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes; and the 1992 Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.

20. The ECE cooperates with the ILO/WHO/UNEP International Programme for Chemical Safety (IPCS) and with UNEP on the implementation of chapters of UNCED Agenda 21, in particular chapters 19 and 20 (environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals and of hazardous wastes including prevention of illegal international traffic in them), and chapter 22 (safe and environmentally sound management of radioactive wastes).

21. The results of the Workshop on Human Settlements and Sustainable Development held in Orebro (Sweden) (HBP/R.294) provided a basis for the contribution of the Committee to the implementation of UNCED Agenda 21.

22. The Committee on Human Settlements has also expressed its readiness to cooperate with other relevant UN/ECE subsidiary bodies in the implementation of Agenda 21, as it declared the promotion of sustainable development to be one of its two basic strategic objectives.

23. The Inland Transport Committee and the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems considered a proposal to convene a conference in the UN/ECE region on transport and the environment, which is one of the recommendations contained in Agenda 21.

International Conference on Population and Development (1994)

24. UN/ECE, jointly with the Council of Europe and UNFPA, has convened the European Population Conference in Geneva from 23-26 March 1993 in preparation for the International Conference. The agenda and programme for the European Conference, as well as the draft recommendations to be adopted at the meeting, have been circulated to UN/ECE member Governments.

World Conference on Women (1995)

25. By its resolution 44/77 the Assembly convened the Fourth World Conference on Women and called for regional meetings to prepare the World Conference. At its forty-sixth session the Commission included in its programme of work provision for the convening of a regional preparatory meeting for the World Conference. To date the Commission has taken no decision to proceed with work in this area.

26. The secretariat initiated work on its publication on statistics of women in the ECE region. The publication will be aimed at a wide target audience and will contain a range of basic statistics on women and men. The secretariat hopes to be able to publish it as an ECE contribution to the World Conference.

International Year of the Family (IYF)

27. By its resolution 44/82 the Assembly proclaimed 1994 the International Year of the Family. By its resolution 46/92 the Assembly invited the regional commissions to exert all possible efforts in preparation for the observance of the Year and to cooperate in achieving its objectives. The ECE secretariat

has submitted a written contribution to the European and North American Preparatory Meeting for the IYF which will be held in Malta in April 1993.

World Summit for Social Development (1995)

28. Assembly resolution 47/92 convening a world summit for social development requests the regional commissions to include the world summit in their programme of work for 1993, with particular emphasis on the social situation in their respective regions, including proposals, and to prepare an integrated report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. The secretariat has prepared a report on the activities of the Commission which are of a socio-economic nature.

United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (1996)

29. Assembly resolution 47/180 convening the Habitat II Conference inter alia invites regional organizations to participate actively in the preparatory process. The Committee on Human Settlements could be invited to consider the provisions of the resolution and prepare recommendations for an ECE contribution to the Conference. The ECE secretariat participated in the first preparatory meeting for the Conference held in New York from 1-5 March 1993.

United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons

30. The ECE will publish the outcome of its work on rehabilitation engineering as a contribution to mark the end of the United Nations Decade (1983-1992). This work took the form of a series of workshops which were organized in Washington DC (USA) in June 1990, in Fagernes (Norway), in May 1991 and in Trebon-Spa (Czech Republic) in May 1992. The last workshop was followed by an International Seminar on Rehabilitation Engineering on 28 May 1992.

United Nations International Comparison Programme (ICP)

31. Within the context of the (ICP) the ECE is involved in a joint venture with the European Community, OECD and Austria which enables prices and national accounts (for example GDP per head) to be compared across the world. The joint venture covers a number of African countries in addition to most ECE and OECD countries. The World Bank is also a major contributor to the programme.

32. Development work by the ECE secretariat on statistics of the hidden economy, as part of the development of national accounting in general, is another contribution to the global exercise.

Drug abuse control

33. In the framework of the United Nations system-wide action plan on drug abuse control, ECE monitors abuses of existing Customs and transit Conventions by drug smugglers with a view to implementing new technical and administrative measures to prevent such abuses.